

Message Text

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R 221410Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4819

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 15977

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT UR

SUBJECT: DECEMBER TRENDS

REF: A. MOSCOW 15345 B. MOSCOW 15623 C. MOSCOW 15881

1. THIS MESSAGE SUPPLEMENTS THE EMBASSY'S YEAR-END ASSESSMENT (REFTEL A), THUS BRINGING UP TO THE END OF THE QUARTER AND OF THE MONTH OUR ANALYSIS OF CURRENT TRENDS IN SOVIET POLICY.

2. BREZHNEV CULT. AS THE YEAR DRAWS TO CONCLUSION, BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL CULT CONTINUES TO DEVELOP AT STEADY PACE, ALTHOUGH THE TREND IS NOT AS STRIKING AS EARLIER IN THE YEAR WHEN HE
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NOTICEABLY STEPPED OUT IN FRONT OF HIS LEADERSHIP COLLEAGUES.

A. HEAVY MEDIA TREATMENT AT TIME OF BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO INDIA, PROMINENT PRESS ATTENTION GIVEN TO HIS ACTIVITIES COMPARED WITH COVERAGE DEVOTED TO OTHER MEMBERS OF LEADERSHIP, PUBLIC PRAISE FROM SOVIET OFFICIALS, INCREASINGLY FREQUENT REFERENCE TO BREZHNEV AS HEAD OF THE POLITBURO, AND PUBLIC PLACEMENT OF BREZHNEV PICTURES, ALL TESTIFY TO THE FACT THAT BREZHNEV NOW STANDS HIGH ABOVE HIS OSTENSIBLE PEERS IN TERMS OF PUBLIC TREATMENT.

B. MOST SIGNIFICANT TREND IN RECENT WEEKS IS GROWING EMPHASIS ON BREZHNEV'S ROLE AS INNOVATIVE DOMESTIC LEADER IN ADDITION TO HIS ESTABLISHED ROLE AS PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY. IN RECENT SPEECHES (KIRILENKO ON NOVEMBER 6 AND VARIOUS MEMBERS AT RECENTLY CONCLUDED SUPREME SOVIET SESSION) BREZHNEV WAS SPECIFICALLY SINGLED OUT AS "INITIATOR" OF PROGRAMS AIMED AT IMPROVING ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE. IN CONTRAST TO RESOLUTION ISSUED AT CONCLUSION OF DECEMBER 1972 PLENUM IN WHICH HIS NAME WAS NOT MENTIONED, RESOLUTION PUBLISHED DECEMBER 12 AT CONCLUSION OF TWO-DAY CC PLENUM MENTIONED BREZHNEV'S NAME TWICE AND EMPHASIZED HIS LEADING ROLE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS. RESOLUTION NOTED THAT PLENUM "FULLY AND COMPLETELY" APPROVED POINTS AND CONCLUSIONS PRESENTED IN BREZHNEV'S SPEECH. IT ALSO INSTRUCTED PARTY ORGANIZATIONS TO BE GUIDED BY SPEECH IN WORKING TO FULFILL OBLIGATIONS OF 9174 PLAN.

C. THE CULT NOT WITHSTANDING, IT CLEAR THAT BREZHNEV STILL HAS LIMITATIONS ON HIS FREEDOM OF ACTION, AND WE SUSPECT THAT HE REMAINS CONSCIOUS OF CONCERNS OF HIS COLLEAGUES ABOUT MOVING TOO FAR OUT IN FRONT OF THEM. WHILE HE HIMSELF IS PLAYING LEADING ROLE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS, OTHER MEMBERS OF POLITBURO CONTINUE TO GET SOME PUBLIC EXPOSURE. AND IN THEIR PUBLIC SPEECHES THEY ARE NOT UNIFORM IN THEIR TREATMENT OF BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS.

D. WE WOULD ALSO NOTE THAT KOSYGIN, AFTER A LONG REST IN THE SOUTH, SHOWED UP IN MOSCOW FOR THE CC PLENUM AND THE OPENING SESSION OF THE SUPREME SOVIET ON DECEMBER 12 BUT MISSED THE FOLLOWING SESSIONS AND HAS APPARENTLY NOT AS YET RESUMED HIS NORMAL APPEARANCES IN MOSCOW.

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3. HANDLING OF CONTACTS AND INFORMATION ISSUES. REFTEL B (PARAGRAPHS 6-9) DESCRIBES A MORE SOPHISTICATED SOVIET MEDIA PRESENTATION OF WESTERN PROBLEMS TO THE DOMESTIC AUDIENCE. WE HAVE HAD A REPORT (REFTEL C) THAT MOSCOW MAY SHIFT FROM THE DEFENSIVE TO THE OFFENSIVE IN THE "IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE," BUT IN A WAY WHICH COULD HAVE SOME POSITIVE RESULTS IN THE EAST-WEST CONTEXT. SOVIET

TREATMENT OF THE RECENT MOSCOW MEETING OF CP SECRETARIES ON IDEOLOGY LENDS SOME SLIGHT SUPPORT TO THIS REPORT. HOWEVER, IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER BREZHNEV'S ALMA ATA "VICTORY THROUGH CONTACTS" APPROACH WILL CARRY THE DAY.

4. MEANWHILE, CURRENT ATTITUDES OF SOVIET CULTURAL TSARS ALSO SHOW SOME SIGNS OF ATTRITION. IT HAD BEEN RUMORED THAT THE AUTHORITIES ARE REVIEWING THE WORKS OF SEVERAL WELL-KNOWN BUT RARELY PUBLISHED AUTHORS; THE RUMORS SEEMED PARTIALLY CONFIRMED BY ANNOUNCEMENTS THAT A NEW VOLUME CONTAINING THREE BULGAKOV WORKS (WHITE GUARD, THEATRICAL NOVEL, AND MASTER AND MARGARITA) AND A COLLECTION OF MANDELSHTAM POETRY HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED. EDITIONS OF BOTH ARE VERY SMALL, HOWEVER, AND CHECKS AT MOSCOW BOOKSTORES INDICATE THAT FEW READERS WILL EVER RECEIVE THEM. MOST WILL GO TO LIBRARIES AND TO MEMBERS OF THE WRITERS UNION, ACCORDING TO LOCAL SOURCES. OTHER SIGNS ARE THE APPEARANCE OF POEMS BY AKHMATOVA AND TSVETAIEVA IN SOVIET LITERARY JOURNALS AND THE PREMIER OF A NEW PLAY AT THE SOVREMENNIK THEATER (BALALAIKIN AND COMPANY) WHICH SATIRIZES CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS BY MEANS OF A LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY SETTING. ALL THIS HAS LED SOME LOCAL OBSERVERS TO SPECULATE THAT WE ARE WITNESSING A PARTIAL OPENING TOWARD A MORE LIBERAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE. THE OPENING THUS FAR IS NO MORE THAN A CRACK, IF THAT, BUT IT BEARS WATCHING.

5. EUROPEAN DEFENSE. SOVIET MEDIA HAVE TAKEN A SHARPLY CRITICAL APPROACH TO RESURGENCE OF IDEA OF INDEPENDENT EUROPEAN DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT. AN MFA OFFICIAL HAS PRIVATELY UNDERLINED THIS CONCERN TO US AND SUGGESTED THAT U.S. AND SOVIET UNION HAVE SHARED INTEREST IN
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AVOIDING PRECIPITATE U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWALS FROM EUROPE: U.S. BECAUSE OF SHOCK IT WOULD CAUSE IN RELATION WITH EUROPE, SOVIET UNION BECAUSE OF IMPETUS IT WOULD GIVE TO EUROPEAN DEFENSE FORCE IDEA. WE BELIEVE THAT SOVIET FEARS OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE ARE GENUINE, INVOLVING INTER ALIA THE SPECTRE OF A POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY UNITED WESTERN EUROPE WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS, OF A RESURGENT GERMANY, AND OF A NEW ADVERSARY LESS STABLE AND RELIABLE (IF ALSO LESS POWERFUL) THAN A U.S.- DOMINATED NATO. SOVIETS PROBABLY HOPE THAT WESTERN EUROPE'S INTEREST IN EUROPEAN DEFENSE IDEA--TO THE EXTENT IT HAS SPRUNG FROM THE ME CRISIS--WILL DIE DOWN WITH THE CRISIS ITSELF. IN ANY CASE, SOVIET OPPOSITION TO EUROPEAN DEFENSE FORCE CUTS ACROSS SEVERAL TRADITIONAL SOVIET POLICY OBJECTIVES (E.G., EFFORTS TO SOW DISSENSION BETWEEN U.S. AND WESTERN

EUROPE AND TO SECURE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM EUROPEAN CONTINENT), AS WELL AS SEVERAL MORE RECENT SOVIET POLICY THRUSTS (E.G., DIVISIVE OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY SUSPICIONS OF U.S.-SOVIET CONDOMINIUM AND EXPLOITATION OF ARAB OIL WEAPON). EMBASSY IS PREPARING FULLER TREATMENT OF POLICY DILEMMA POSED FOR SOVIETS BY EUROPEAN DEFENSE IDEA. MEANWHILE IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT SUBJECT HAS AGAIN BECOME A MAJOR PREOCCUPATION FOR THEM.

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6. MIDDLE EAST. SOVIETS HAVE CONTINUED TO TAKE A LOW-KEY APPROACH TO PALESTINIAN AND OTHER SENSITIVE ME ISSUES--AN INDICATION THAT THEY ARE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN SERIOUS WORK AT GENEVA AND IN A POLITICAL PROCESS WHICH ALLOWS THEM TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE. WE REMAIN SKEPTICAL, HOWEVER, THAT THEIR POSITIVE ATTITUDE COULD LONG SURVIVE

AN ARAB TURN TOWARD INTRANSIGENCE OR RENEWED VIOLENCE. AND WE ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT, DESPITE THEIR CURRENT HELPFULNESS, THE SOVIETS SEE A SUCCESSFUL FINAL SETTLEMENT AS IN THEIR INTEREST; THEY PROBABLY FORESEE CONTINUED UPS AND DOWNS WHICH WILL GIVE THEM OPPORTUNITIES TO PURVEY THEIR SUPPORT TO ARAB PROTAGONISTS AND THUS TO RETAIN A DEGREE OF INFLUENCE.

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7. JEWISH EMIGRATION CONTINUES UNABATED WITH FINAL FIGURES FOR 1973 EXPECTED TO APPROACH 35,000, DESPITE THE ME CRISIS. SOVIETS CONTINUE, WHILE PERMITTING EMIGRATION, TO TRY TO DISCOURAGE POTENTIAL EMIGRANTS. THUS THEY CONTINUE TO DEMONSTRATE INTRANSIGENCE IN HANDLING HARD-CORE REFUSAL CASES AND TO HARASS JEWISH ACTIVIST VIA ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL PROCEDURES. EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN REDUCING THE PRESSURE FROM A PORTION OF JEWISH POPULATION TO EMIGRATE.SOMMERLATTE

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